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Michigan Senate continues battle against rise of methamphetamine

LANSING – The Michigan Senate approved legislation this week to combat the increase in methamphetamine use throughout the state, said Sen. Beverly Hammerstrom, R-Temperance.

The legislation addresses the growing threat Michigan communities face as methamphetamine use continues to rise.

“In less than 10 years, the incidence of methamphetamine cases has risen at an alarming rate. The number of meth lab busts across the state has gone from just six in 1996 to more than 250 in 2003,” said Sen. Hammerstrom, chair of the Senate Health Policy Committee. “My colleagues and I are committed to raising awareness of the dangers of this drug and protecting our communities.”

Cleaning up after a meth lab bust is a difficult and involved process. The chemicals used to produce meth are highly explosive in nature and have an extreme toxicity level that can permanently contaminate houses, vehicles, or hotel rooms where the drug is manufactured. After a bust, these areas are considered hazardous waste sites.

The legislation also protects children who possibly have been exposed to the dangerous toxins during the production process. While meth is “cooked,” fumes are released into the air which can cause allergies, asthma and colds, as well as learning disabilities and psychological problems. Many children have also been burned by the chemicals or equipment used to make the drug.

“Those who make and use meth have no concern for their own well-being,” Hammerstrom said. “They certainly are not going to take precautions to protect children from their carelessness. It is imperative that we act swiftly to safeguard them against the dangers of this drug.”

The multiple-bill package will:

- Require statewide criteria that every community should follow in order for a home or other meth production site to be considered clean and ready for future occupancy;
- Require the Department of Environmental Quality to report the nature of environmental contamination materials found during meth lab busts to the state Legislature;
- Require a public website listing of the location of meth busts and indicating if the location has been cleaned; and
- Require the Department of Human Services to partner with local law enforcement officials when a child has been exposed to meth.

The ingredients used to produce the highly-addictive drug are readily available through chemicals and a number of household products including over-the-counter cold medicines. In 2005, the Legislature restricted the sale of all cold medicines containing pseudoephedrine, one of the main ingredients found in meth.